arttamulla intu matam

The *magnum opus* of Kaviyarasu Kannadasan

Read in English......

A humble tribute of Dr.N.RAMANI to a great poet....

BOOK TWO

THREE
AMINA WAITS AT THE GATE

A Tamil had been to London.

After his bath in the morning, he smeared holy ash on his forehead.

An Englishman who saw him then asked him, "Why do you smear ash on the forehead?"

The Tamil answered :

"We remind ourselves that this body will one day be reduced to ashes. Our evil thoughts leave us."

The Englishman was taken by surprise by the sudden revelation.

He started inquiring into the Hindu philosophy.

The Tamil is still living in London and he has personally told me about the above incident.

The repeated insistence on the transience of the body is not meant to frustrate man.

It is meant only to inspire confidence.

vittu vitappokutu uyir; vitta utane

suttu vitappokinrar surrattar.

(Life is anyhow going to forsake the body; when it has thus forsaken, relatives are going to burn the body to ashes.)

This reminder by Pattinattar is meant to make us lead an honest life with the awareness of the inevitability of death.

Any man comes to have this wisdom, one day or the other.

When we attend a funeral, the thought that we are also going to die inevitably occurs within ourselves.

kayame itu poyyada; verum karrataitta paiyada

(This body is false; it is an air-filled bag) was said not to demean the God-created body.

"Do not indulge in falsity to preserve this false body; Do not steal; Do not cheat." - such is the warning in the remark.

This life is a loan granted by God.

This body is a free gift.

Baldness, white hair, and loss of teeth are reminders posted by God.

"Your promissory note is expiring."

"Prepare yourself to pay back the debt."

"I'm going to seize your life." - that's the warning.

Our sithars and wise men have pointed out that the Amina is at the door to seize our body.

They called the Amina *Yaman* or *Kutruvan.*

Honesty, uprightness, sympathy and compassion grow within, when man has understood the transience of the body.

The desire to live life in the real sense comes to be.

The strength to ignore difficulties comes to be.

The thought that one should work hard and provide for the family before death comes to be.

Those who have forgotten the transience of the body get agitated in attempts to earn wealth by any means only to die without enjoying the benefits of the money thus earned.

One of the avowed objectives of the Hindu religious preceptors is to make man aware of the irresistible force of death even before death occurs.

Such awareness is the basis of the spirit of enjoying anything in its due extent and in true fairness in distribution.

aviyodu kayam alintalum metiniyil

pavienru namam padaiyate - meviya sir

vittaramum katampum venta mada nence

settaraip polat tiri.

(Even if this soul and body were to be together destroyed, don't earn the name of a sinner in the wide world, foolish heart, boasting and mischief are to be disowned. Go about the world as if you are dead.)

ippirappai nampi irupparo nencame

vayppirukka vayil manai irukka soppanampol

vikkip parkittak kan mettap pancittu appaik

kakki settuk kottak kantu!

(Even while being considerate, being wealthy enough to own a house with a portico, with clenched teeth, hazy eyes and watery mouth, one dies as if in a dream. Witnessing such an exigency of life, my heart, who'll prefer to have faith in life?)

onpatu vait tolpaikkoru nalaip polave

anbu vaittu nence alaintaye - vankalukkal

tattittatti settai tattik kattip pittuk

katti kutti tinnak kantu.

(Even after seeing the strong eagles with folded wings hopping on their legs tearing the flesh, my heart, you roamed about with day-to-day love for the skin-bag with nine openings.)

mutar canku amututtum mei kulalar asai

natuc cangam nalvilangu puttum - kataic cangam

ampotatu utum, ammatto? immatto?

nampumi valnta nalame.

(The infant is fed with the first conch; the middle conch will declare desire for soft haired women fettering man into the holy bond of marriage; when death occurs the last conch will declare it. The nature of life on earth is just this much and that much.)

ettanai nal kuti etutta sariram ivai!

attanaiyum man tinpatallavo - vittakanar

kalaip pitittu mellak kankul pakal arritatte

melaik kuti iruppome!

(How many days have gone into the making of this body! Isn't everything about it ultimately to decay in the earth? Holding the feet of the wise, let's gradually ascend for a dwelling in a world where there is neither day nor night.)

iruppatu poy povatu mey enrenni nence

oruttarukkum tinkinai unnate - parutta tonti

namatu enru nam iruppa nai narikal pey kaluku

tammatu ena tam irukkum.

(Realising that to live is illusion and that death is certain, oh my heart, don't even think of any harm to anyone. While we are deluded into believing that our fat bellies are our own, dogs and foxes and ghostly vultures will only be awaiting their prey.)

— these are the songs of Pattinathar.

Though his life history tells us that Pattinathar sang these songs about the transitoriness of life at a frustrated stage in his life, we also understand that only such realisation brought quietude to his mind.

"Go about the world as if you are dead," implies a detached attitude.

However, we should notice that though he underscores transience, (Even this soul and body were to be together destroyed), he has also said that one should not earn the name of a sinner in the wide world.

There are three conches unto life according to Pattinathar.

The first is used to feed the infant with milk.

The second is blown at the time of marriage.

The third is blown after death, in the funeral procession.

In this instance he puns on the word.

‘sankam’ means both the ‘conch’ and ‘confluence’.

‘The first conch feeds’ indicates the conch through which the infant is fed with milk.

‘The middle conch declaring love for soft haired women’ indicates the confluence of the man with the woman in the middle of life.

‘The last conch’ indicates the ultimate confluence at death.

The nature of life is only that much, according to him.

We are deluded into believing that the body belongs to us. But the dogs, the foxes and the raven are awaiting their prey, awaiting the day of eating the body.

What passionate desire do we have for the impermanent body! How all do we indulge in a panegyric of it!

You may ask wherefore should we consider this body and its beauty as illusory.

The first benefit is giving up excessive attachment.

The second benefit is the contentment with what one gets instead of tottering in the numerous directions of desire that spread like the tentacles of an octopus.

That’s why the Hindus unlike the others who bury the dead, cremate the bodies.

The period for this body is over. It is fitting that it is reduced to ashes. The illusion of its existence is not to be created, keeping it buried.

The grave becomes the property of the buried corpse.

What could become the property of the burnt?

Even a needle without an ear does not accompany you in the ultimate journey — so did they say.

Why should a ground of six feet be made the property of the dead body?

They believed that the dead body being reduced to ashes alone is proper.

The philosophy of material transience is a philosophy of self-evaluation, evolved by our wise men.

"The Amina is at the doorstep

Be prepared to pay back what has been borrowed from God!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
STREET DOG

Pattinattar calls the mind "the street dog".

The mind runs like a street dog in the market place running from shop to shop.

Isn't the mind the cause behind all the sufferings of man?

Bharathiar addresses the mind, *"peyay ulavum sirumaname"* (Oh ignoble mind in suffering and distress like a ghost).

He is also worried about the vacillations of the mind.

This mind at times faces fearsome issues with daring.

When daring is necessary it is fear struck.

It is bewildered needlessly in projected fancies.

It cries for the days past.

It is afraid of the future that is yet to come to be.

It is overzealous in consoling others.

When such consolation becomes necessary unto itself, it loses all its confidence.

It is deluded by what is green.

It whimpers when it is drought.

It becomes anxious about relatives.

At one stage it becomes benumbed.

It cultivates desires.

It gets agitated in a wave of desires.

In a state of frustration it gives enough strength to its own hands to strangle itself.

The mind is the cause behind murder, stealing, lies, piety, grace, affection and everything else.

The mind's dynamics is the dynamics of man.

When will the mind have the daring to face anything?

When the mind believes in the Hindu tenet of everything is an illusion.

Kannan says in the Gita :

"Take me for the transcendent. Wipe your desire for everything else and meditate upon me. I will relieve you off the sea of birth and death."

OK, let's try to do so.

But we are not at all able to.

We escape the fire only to fall into the water.

We escape the chasing dog only to fall upon the teeth of the fox.

When we give one up, the other gets hold of us.

We chew pan to give up smoking only to retain both the habits. Unable to forget what we want to forget, we become afflicted with the new ones too.

A fellow was put behind bars for having printed counterfeit currency. He started printing them within the prison. Which prison is he to be put into?

The mind considers the other woman to be more beautiful than the wife.

We do not smell the perfume of the flower on hand.

The flower beyond our reach raises in our imagination and pulls the mind towards it.

The mind does not rest happy with fulfilled desires.

It struggles right unto death for unfulfilled desires.

Like a cine-fan, longing for an actress even if Mahalakshmi becomes his wife, the mind longs for what is not, ignoring what is.

When the others praise, it softens.

When scorned, it is worried.

There are a thousand tangles and a thousand complications.

Only the spider knows how it has woven its web.

Only God knows how these tangles came to be in life.

Our responsibility is to travel by the ship.

To take it to the shore is God's responsibility.

When God creates an ocean without waves, man can have a heart with no vacillations.

"He who planted the tree would water it," *(maram vaittavan tannir urruvan)* - so do they say.

"When will he water?", so does the mind long.

Who is free from oscillations, desires and anxieties?

A mother earnestly appealed to Buddha to resurrect her dead child.

The Buddha told her to fetch a pinch of ash from a house that has witnessed no death.

She went round the country and came back saying nowhere was there a house that has seen no death.

"Your story is one among these stories." The Buddha sent her away, saying thus.

There is no justification for my anxiety if I ever come across a person with no anxiety.

If I have a hundred, the other has two hundred worries.

I am fortunate so far.

I have a lesser anxiety than he does.

No one has the chance to die content after everything has been fulfilled.

The source of one's anxiety is his wife.

The source of another is his children.

The source for yet another is his friend.

The source for still another is his enemy.

To one more the source is something with which he has no connection at all.

Only a sail ship totters in the wind on the ocean.

Only the adept in everything often becomes irresolute.

What anxiety can there be to a paper boat?

Let the mind be as soft as paper.

Let it withstand happiness and sorrow, summer, snow and rain.

Surrender the sufferings of the self unto the parantaman.

Enjoy your happiness with no trouble to the other.

You cannot of course avoid death; but you can always being irresolute.

When I was young, the very thought of the death of my parents would send shivers through me.

One day, they did die.

The shivering body came back to normal after 48 hours.

All shivering and anxiety as long as the fear of something happening someway sometime exists.

If you anticipate the certainty of events, you will be subject to no shock.

Daruman wept; Bhiman wept; Raman wept; even Ravanan wept.

Kamban described the shivering of the mind as the shivering of the debtor's heart.

At the end of each principle, the interest remains to be paid.

The rain has stopped; but the drizzle persists.

Mind plays havoc until the moment of death.

If one understands that after all such is the nature of the mind quite early in life, he becomes resolute in accepting everything as an illusion.

ennatan natakkum natakkattume

iruttinil niti marayattume

tannale velivarum tayankate

oru talaivan irukkiran mayankate.

(Let whatever may happen happen; let justice be lost in darkness; It's bound to come out of darkness. Don't lose heart. There's always the Lord. Don't be bewildered.)

FOURTEEN

Andal Ruled Over Tamil

There are plenty of works in the literature of love in Tamil. Many of them make man the lover.

A few make the King the lover.

All of them portray human love, the love of a man for a woman.

But those works of literature which find what is feminine in the masculine and in which the nayaki bhava is assumed adopting God as the lover have a special sweetness about them.

The longing of a man becoming that of a woman is greater than the longing of a man for a woman.

How wonderfully those born as men and assuming themselves to be women exploit the grammar of love!

In such exploitation what a whole new set of idioms has Hinduism bestowed on Tamil!

In fact, Nalayira Divya Prabandham can be said to be a veritable dictionary of such idioms.

Prabandham is full of the display of fireworks in portraying the pangs of feminine love and excels the poems of Muttollayiram and other Sangam literature of love; it excels even Kambaramayanam in this regard.

"Tutu", "matal", "ula" and "Prabandham" are not new forms to Tamil.

Divya Prabandham is unique in that it inspires divine love and the passions at the worldly plane together. It transforms the taste of bakthi into a literary taste; it is a blend of the felicity of Tamil, the felicity of sound and the felicity of sense.

There is no mistake in claiming that such had been the service of Hinduism to Tamil.

The love poetry in Tamil has described in detail the four fold feminine virtues, namely "accam" (timidity), "nanam" (bashfulness), "matam" (simplicity) and "payirppu" (delicacy) and the various physical effects of longing in love.

Even a casual reader of Tamil literature will find that these details do find a place in different degrees and different combinations in almost all works of Tamil literature.

As per the rules of composition of love poetry in Tamil, the various moods of love are classified into such divisions like "nanikkan putaittal" (half closing the eyes in bashfulness), "nencotu kilattal" (engaging one's own heart in a dialogue) and celebrated in many works.

There are quite a number of songs within each great work of Tamil literature which describe the various states of longing in love.

In such works love may end up in legitimate union (karpiyal) or may meander through surreptitious love (kalaviyal).

Those pieces of literature have no other purpose than portraying love in exaggerated terms.

But in religious literature, bakthi is the prime purpose of even love.

Religious literature had an admixture of love in line with mixing bitter medicine with honey to make it palatable; such literature thus became palatable to the average person.

We too prefer to have such literature rather than those which go on enumerating the God's attributes in different names (namavali).

Everything in the world is the manifest form of God's dynamics.

Male/female relationship is no exception.

There is nothing wrong even if it becomes exaggerated.

It takes the awakened soul to God and the average man to his wife.

As such, the sweet songs of the Prabandham ma*ke up an enc*yclopedia of immeasurable passions.

Many Tamil expressions in Nacciyar Tirumoli had surprised me with their novelty.

Some will claim that there had been no woman in the name of Andal and the songs were written by Periyalvar himself in the guise of a woman character.

But if a Meera Bhai had been there in the North, in all possibility, there had b*een an Andal in t*he South.

Whatever may it be, what we have is rare literary treasure indeed.

I too have melted in love for Kannan assuming the guise of a lovelorn lady.

kannan ennum

mannan perai

colla colla

kallum mullum

puvay marum

mella mella

(As you keep repeating the name of Kannan, stones and thorns will become flowers).

Kannanai ninaikkata nalillaiye

katalil tavikkata nalillaiye

(There is no day gone without the thought of Kannan

There is no day go*ne without quivering in passion for Kannan).*

I have cried out in such vein in melodies.

But the adroitness of Nacciyar in maintaining perfect rhythm, perfect v*ocabulary and perfect meaning* a*ll in one makes me only feel* ashamed of my own limitations.

Her pavaik kuttu in Tamil takes "anta cirmalkum ayarpati sirumiyarai (that nobility pervading cowherd girls) to kurvel kotuntolilan (the professionally cruel holder of the sharp spear); to nantakopalan kumaran (the son of Nantagopalan); to erarnta kanni yasodai ilancinkam (the lion cub of a *son of Yasot*hai with graceful *eyes); to karmenic cenkan katirmati*yam pol mukattan (dark skinned, red eyed fa*ce glowing like the* rays of the sun.

Nacciyar says that they would abstain f*rom ghee and milk (n*eyyunnom, palunnom); would not *adorn the eyes with colirium (ma*iyittelutom); would not wear flowers on their hair (malaritt*u nam mutiyom).*

*He is the one who has meas*ured the whole world in his giant form (onki ulakalanta uttaman).

Aha, what a grand metaphor!

Do you know what are the ite*ms of perennial wealt*h there?

Cows that are so munificent as *to yield enough t*o fill pots (vankakkutam niraikkum val*lal perum pasukkal).*

*Wha*t else but bakthi could call the cow munificent?

Here is another m*etaphor, almost scientific* in terms.

Nacciyar describes the rain :

ali malaik kanna

onru ni kai karavel

aliyul pukku

mukarntukodu artteri

uli mutalvan

uruvampol mey karuttu

paliyam tolutai

patmanapan kaiyil

*ali pol minn*i

valampuri pol ninratirntu

talate sarnkam

utaitta saramalai pol

vala ulakinil peytitai ...

(Entering the ocean and lifting the water up *becoming black clouds like the dark skinned lord of the times sparkling in lightning like the discus in the hands of patmanabha roaring like the conch rain has to shower like arrows being showered from the bow.)*

(Note : The prayer here is for the grace of God to be showered on the world for its survival.)

That Kannan is the Mayan (dark skinned) the son of the city of Vatamuturai.

Kamban describes Ilankai as "vinku nir ilankai" (Ilankai with abundant water). Nacciyar describes God as "tuyapperu nir yamunai turaivan" (the chief of the maritime district through which the pure waters of the Yamuna flow).

What a *novel* expression is "tayai kutal vilakkam seita tamotaran" (Tamotaran who has sanctifi*ed the womb of his* mother).

There comes Kannan :

"tumani matattu currum vila*kkeriya (as the lamps are lit ro*und the sleeping hall in the palace bedecked with pearls); tupam kamala (as the smell of incense pervades); tuyilan*ai mel kan valarum maman makale (my ni*ece, sleeping on your bed); manik katavam tal tiravay (unbar the doors with j*ingling bells); Aunties! hey my au*nties! Won't you wake her up?

narrattulai muti narayanan (Narayanan whose hair smell *of the basi*l) has come. He is the one who bestow*s (his blessings) on us if we praise h*im (porrap parai tarum punniyan); *kurramonrillata kovalartam* porkotiye (you the blemishless golden creeper born of the cowherd); sirrate pesate sel*lap pentatti ni (don't move*, don't speak, you are my darling wife.)

How spontaneously do words fall in order!

The birds have started crying. You *are still lying on your bed without having had a cool, refreshing an*d enervating bath (kullak kutaintu niratate). You the igno*rant, lo! in the tank*

*at the backy*ard of your house senkalunir (the sweet smelling red water lily) has opened its petals and ampal (the white water lily) has started closing its petals.

(Note : The opening and closing of the petals of different f*lowers indicate the advent* of the dawn.)

elle! (this is the call word in the Pandya region)

Youngling of a parrot! Will you still keep sleeping?

My goodness! Is Kan*nan al*so asleep?

The source of our sustenance (emperuman) bestowing clothes, water and food on us! nantakopala, won't you wake up?

Mother Yasota! You are the best of *those* who have waists as narrow and tender as the stem of a flower (kompanarkkelam kolunte); you are the lamp of the clan of the cowherd (kula vilakke); prompt your son *a little ple*ase.

Isn't he the one born of a woman during a night and grown as the son of another? We have come in desire for him.

Hey, Kanna!

Have you forgotten your rasalila (the play of *love); The flower strew*n chested Lord! you are abed on the soft bed *with your chest* on the breasts of Nappinnai, whose hair is bedecked with bunches of flowers.

Adi, Nappinnai!

Won't you leave your bed leaving your husband to himself?

Perhaps you can't bear even a *moment's* separation from him!

It's alright.

It's not a matter of possessive philosophy; it in fact becomes you.

Hey, thou Lord Kali preventing us from shivering; Vimala, thou bestoweth *war*mth upon us.

Unable to bear separation from you any more, we bow at your feet. Wake up and come forth.

Won't your eyes look us in graceful little winks like a lotus blossoming forth?

Thou measured the whole world that day with a single step; won over the southern Ilankai.

Thou vanquished the asura in the form of the calf; kicked away the wheels of a cart; held the hillock like an umbrella.

male! manivanna!

Shapely lamp! Flag and canopy!

Sire who sleepest on the leaf of the banyan!

Noble Govinta who defeats those who stand apart!

Won't you get us and come forth?

We'll wear the bracelet (sutakam), the epaulet (tolvalai), earstuds (totu), flower like earrings (sevippu) and th*e ornaments on* the feet (patakam).

We'll dress up. Then we'll pour enough ghee to cover cooked rice and eat together with the ghee dribbling through our elbows.

Aha!

Ghee to cover cooked rice serv*ed on the* plate! It'll *dribble dow*n through *the elb*ows!

Nacciyar says fur*ther.*

*Gov*inta who has no flaw of any kind.

*We the ig*norant children call you. Don't become angry. Matava! Thou hast churned the seas! Kesava, come, come, come forth.

The overflowing passion of Nacciyar flows forth from us too.

Did she stop with cherished love? She went to the extent of getting married to him.

Elephants marched; golden pots filled to the brim were carried in a procession; festoons were on display; the marriage pandal was decorated with areca and plantain leaves. The group of gods including Indiran were present; Nacciyar came in bridal silk saree; Mayavan garlanded her.

Holy water was brought from the four directions; Elderly brahmins blessed the couple with longevity.

Dancing young damsels came to accost the bridal pair holding lamps bright like the sun held on decorated little earthen pots; drums (mattalam) were beaten; they stood in a row and blew the conches.

Matucutanan held her hand in marriage in the bridal pandal decorated with pearls.

Is he not the one who guides us through this as well as the sevenfold births? Is he not a benefactor?

So he held her feet with his noble ha*nds and ma*de her step on the grinding stone (ammi).

What kind of a person is he?

Hey, white conch, you may tell us.

Will his breath smell of camphor? or of lotus? Will that beautiful, noble, red lips be sweeter than sweetness?

Hey, conch, great conch, the conch spiralling to the right! Panca sanyam!

Won't you tell me about the *taste o*f his lips?

Hey clouds!

The clouds spread like a canopy through the sky!

Great clouds showering enough to ripen the mangoes!

Cold clouds, raising up carrying water from the seas!

Black clouds of the season of rains!

Huge clouds stretching up like an elephant in musth!

You clouds, who have the mount Venkatam as your Lord!

Hasn't he become my Lord, taking me as the one who has surrendered myself unto him?

Will the world honour him if he tortures a delicate woman?

Nacciyar falters in passion; we also falter.
Nacciyar melts in passion; we also melt.
Nacciyar pleads in passion; we also plead.
Nacciyar is endearing in her terms; Tamil also becomes endearing in its terms.